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CLASSICS IN THE MODERN SCHOOL

My subject raises two questions, one of which depends on the other:

(1) Should the Classics form part of modern education?

(2) If so, what part?

It is not safe to assume the answer yes to the first question, because we are so often urged to do away with the Classics on the ground that to study them is useless; I must therefore briefly consider both questions.

What is meant by useless? Some persons mean that which cannot be turned to direct account in wage-earning. That view is the common view of the parents of our boys, and it underlies most of the criticisms of education which we read in the press. I have in my possession letters from parents asking that their sons may drop each and every of the subjects which are taught in school, always on this same ground. One wants to drop French, another Latin, another mathematics or science, Greek of course; one letter says, "I should be glad if my son could drop his English and Scripture, because he is going to be a land-agent, and these subjects will be of no use to him"; another, addressed not to me but to a well-known head-master, asks, "Please may my son discontinue his study of Shakespeare, because he does not intend to be a poet". Take the ideal which seems to be dearest to the heart of the public, to sit on an office stool for forty years and then have a pension: for such a life nearly every study is useless in the accepted sense. Of what use to the Government clerk are history, literature, algebra, Euclid, Scripture, geography—this we know on high authority is useless also to the diplomat and the ambassador—not to mention French, German, Latin, or Greek? To be consistent, a boy ought to spend all his time on the three R's, *précis*, and tots, and his parents would expect him to save five years and be ready at twelve years of age for the Civil Service. But I need say no more. In its extreme, this wage-earning fallacy is ridiculous; it is however the hardest of our tasks to convince the people at large that this is so.

We must have another definition of the useless and the useful; one that implies a wider view of education. Our duty is to develop all the boy's powers, bodily, mental and moral, harmoniously and to the highest possible degree. We have to discover them first; next, to devise and apply the best methods of training them; lastly to give special attention to any special power. Our system must rest on an equal development of all three kinds, a certain minimum being expected in each, and it must later be able to adapt itself to the varying capacities of its subjects. Such a task would be impossible in a school were it not that in fact most children fall into a few distinct groups large enough

and few enough to be practically dealt with.

We take now the mental side only; and ask in particular, can classical study do anything for that, and has it any advantage or disadvantage as compared with other mental exercises? The testimony of the past in favor of the positive value of classical study is overwhelming; the testimony of the present is not so strong, and many of those who have passed through it are distinctly adverse. I shall later suggest reasons for this change of view; at present I will simply say that it is only negative: these persons say that they have gained nothing from the Classics; they do not say they have gained from other studies what their fathers did undoubtedly gain from the Classics. As a rule they complain that they know nothing, and assume that they have gained nothing. That their gain, if any, was not worth the time spent, we may admit.

What are the intellectual objects of education? I should say to make the mind capable of action, for which it should have strength, quickness and accuracy. Strength is gained by the constant grappling with problems, hard enough to need an effort, but not too hard to be solved unaided. Quickness, by the need for instant solution. Accuracy, by constant distinction of minute differences. One thing is always necessary, the power of exact expression in words. Any study which serves to train these faculties, is useful, even if it never earns a groat. The foundation thus laid, the mind is able to control and use the transcendent faculty of imagination, the gift of God to all children, so commonly starved or warped or destroyed by bad training, but if it can be kept, the grown man's most precious jewel.

Now mental power, quickness, and accuracy, may be trained by such studies as mathematics; accuracy, with the faculty of observation, by natural science; for logical training there is nothing better than Euclid as far as it goes. None of these subjects, however, is enough by itself, nor all together. Thought is wider than mathematics and natural science; and for the orderly examination of thought, and its exact expression, there must be training in language. For this, English is not enough. Each nation has its own way of looking at life; and a mind must be narrow which looks at life only in one way. But those who belong to one nation grow up to look at life in one way only; very few such minds are able by their own power to enlarge themselves, yet every average mind is capable of being led to enlarge its outlook on life by being put in the position of a foreign mind. This difference between nations, however, does not depend only on ideas; it is bound up with the ways in which ideas are expressed. It follows that the mental training and enlargement which we seek, cannot be got through English translations; there must be the effort of learning the foreign speech. Just as the organs of speech

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are made flexible and capable by learning a foreign pronunciation, so the mind is made flexible and capable by learning a foreign language; familiar thoughts take new shapes, we are able to examine them and to understand their essence better, just as we understand more of a landscape if we can see it from different points of view.

If this reasoning be correct, we desire for our schools a succession of language problems increasing in difficulty: and we have it at hand. Since modern European languages are more like each other than any one is like the ancient, the school should provide first a modern language and next an ancient language for study. If we had time, I might say two or three of each; but we have only a few years at our disposal, and I am speaking now of the minimum. First we will teach one modern language, having clear differences from our own in thought and expression: then we will apply the strengthened mind to the more difficult study of an ancient language, with expression and thought still further removed from our own. The boy who succeeds in mastering both these will have gained a faculty of mind which will be useful, whatever he may afterwards have to learn.

We cannot profitably consider which of the European languages it were best to begin with. A good case might be made out for more than one; but common consent points to French, not only as a language beautiful and elegant in itself, and as the medium of a fine literature, and as the universal language of diplomacy and high society, but as the gateway to all the Romance languages and hence to Latin. French has inflexions enough to mark it off distinctly from English, and yet is like enough in structure to be readily apprehended and used. It is a great drawback, true, that the spelling is so artificial, and for that reason I wish we could begin with Italian; but there is no help for it. We must now be careful not to confuse the beginner by setting him to another language until he has thoroughly mastered the elements of French. By that, I mean he should be able to understand and to use the language, as far as he goes, correctly and with ease; in an examination, the average boy should not get 20 per cent or 30 per cent, but 70 or 80. How long he will keep to French alone depends largely on his age when he begins; the younger the boy, the slower the progress. At the age of twelve or thereabouts, he will be mature enough to try a harder task; and here I would begin Latin. For each language he must have daily lessons, and one lesson a day is enough to train without taxing the immature mind. For Latin, if he leaves school at sixteen, he has four years; and in this time, despite the greater difficulty of the inflections and vocabulary, he ought to learn how to understand and to use Latin with ease, reading an author like Caesar without difficulty, and expressing his own thoughts easily and correctly in

Latin. I am aware that most boys leave a public school, even at seventeen or eighteen, without coming near this standard, but this is not due to any inherent impossibility, it is due to other causes, which removed, the standard which I ask for can be and actually is attained. I am speaking, remember of the average boy. There are some boys too stupid to learn Latin or French to any purpose; they ought not to be in school at all, but should be using their bodily strength in other spheres. The clever boy, again, runs through our course in half the time.

It must be remembered that the boy's mind becomes now more mature with each year; and after he has been two years at Latin, the new language will become familiar enough to enable him to begin another. Here, at the age of fourteen, the boy must begin to pay attention to his special faculty, or to bethink him what is to be his life-work. The middle class boy who is to leave school at sixteen, will do well to give two years to mastering the elements of German; the boy who is destined for the University must begin Greek. These two years are enough to do the same work which in French took six and in Latin four. The Germanist will learn enough to understand and use the German language correctly and easily within a moderate range; the Grecian will master the accident and syntax of Greek, will read two or three famous books, and will also be able to express himself in that language correctly and easily. I do not think that even the commercial boy would waste his time by learning Greek—on the contrary: however, that end could only be attained if he were to stay at school a year or so longer. But the point I wish to bring out is, that the time necessary for an appreciable mastery of any language is much less than is usually supposed, assuming that the whole schoolwork has been arranged on a reasoned plan and properly taught.

After sixteen there must be some degree of specialising. We are at present ruled here by the Universities, which put a high price on special knowledge; if their practice can be modified, the all-around training should, I think, go on longer. But by the plan I suggest, the foundations of education are safely laid, and the evils of specialising are vastly reduced. By this time, the mathematical and scientific boys may drop a good deal of their classical work, and the classical boys drop a good deal of their mathematics and all their science, both keeping on the English and German. French they will know by this time well enough to go on by themselves; so well indeed that no one who has not tried would believe it to be possible. The possibility is openly denied by those who have not tried it; I have heard it so denied quite lately by two persons high in the educational world.

I come now to consider the positive advantages of Latin and Greek. Why should we in the twentieth century, in which the most important things

seem to be machines, why should we spend time in learning dead languages? The answer is two-fold: one concerns form, and one concerns substance. We have in the form of Latin and Greek a means of training our minds to a higher degree of efficiency than can be done by other languages ancient or modern; we have in the two literatures the chief masterpieces of the human mind.

The form of the two languages, as depending wholly upon inflexion, compels us to recast our thoughts altogether. For this purpose we must apprehend exactly what a given thought is, *i. e.*, it has to be made perfectly clear; and we have then to express exactly the same in another shape. How important this exercise is may be seen by a glance at any daily paper. In politics, in religion, in civil life, we see men quarrelling together because they do not understand their own thoughts or their neighbors', and neither can make his thoughts clear to the other. Half our lawsuits are due to inexact expression, and most of the inexactness is due to misty thought. Now Latin is so lucid and exact, Greek is so delicate and subtle, that to express our thoughts in those languages is a most valuable training in clearness and subtilty. Both also, and especially Greek, have a simplicity and directness which force us to strip off all the meaningless worn-out metaphors which we use unknowingly, for in Greek and Latin metaphors make thought clear, in English they cloud it. I mean the dead metaphors in such phrases as "he fell a victim to intemperance", "a one-sided point of view", "yeoman service", "silence reigned supreme over the scene", and a thousand others. Our words are often far away from the truth; in Latin and especially in Greek they touch the heart of truth. Again; since Macaulay became popular, we have ceased to express the logical relations of thoughts, as Hooker and Milton used to do; but Latin and Greek demand these relations to be exactly expressed. And again, distinct thoughts which in English are confused by being expressed alike, are in Latin and Greek distinguished in form. Thus "if I am" expresses three things, which used to be expressed in English by "If I am", "If I be", and "If I shall be"; these are distinguished in Greek and Latin by form. Now it is a general experience that if several thoughts be expressed by one form, those thoughts tend to be confused; and the only way to ensure their being distinguished is to render them in some other language which has distinct form for each. This done, the distinction once explained may be remembered. Truth then, and logical relation, and distinction in thought are all impressed on the mind by the study of the Classics. I say nothing of such qualities as dignity and grace, or sonorous sound, which are lacking in modern English and conspicuous in Latin or Greek.

THE PERSE SCHOOL, ENGLAND

W. H. D. ROUSE

(To be concluded)

REVIEW

The Attic Theatre. A description of the Stage and Theatre of the Athenians. By A. E. Haigh. Third Edition, revised and in part rewritten by A. V. Pickard-Cambridge. With Illustrations. 8vo. 10s 6d.

This is the third edition of Mr. Haigh's most serviceable and, to the classical student who does not know German, almost indispensable volume on the Attic Theater. In the first edition (1889) Mr. Haigh achieved with considerable success his purpose of collecting and piecing together all the available information concerning the outward features and surroundings of the old Athenian dramatic performances. Shortly after the publication of this first edition, however, many important additions were made to our knowledge of the Greek stage. The site of the theater of Dionysus at Athens was re-excavated in a most thorough and scientific manner by Dörpfeld, who records his results in the monumental work *Das Griechische Theater* (Athens, 1896). Besides, many other theaters were excavated for the first time. New inscriptions were unearthed, and the evidence of ancient authorities was examined and sifted with minutest care; the extant plays had been ransacked and subjected to a careful analysis for the purpose of ascertaining their real scenic and theatrical requirements. The result of all this investigation was to clear up many doubtful points relative to the theater and dramatic performances. To incorporate these results Mr. Haigh brought out a second edition in 1898. The book necessarily underwent many alterations. The third and fourth chapters—those dealing with scenery and the theater—were entirely rewritten. The first chapter, on dramatic contests at Athens, was rewritten in parts, and the other chapters carefully revised. Numerous corrections were made and much new matter inserted, especially on such subjects as the choregia, the theoric fund, theater-tickets, and the costume of the actors and the chorus.

Since 1898 the inscriptions bearing upon the Greek drama, C. I. G. 2. 971-977, have been the subject of thorough investigation at the hands of Professor Capps, Wilhelm, and others. The treatment of all the inscriptional evidence in the latter's *Dramatische Urkunden* is an invaluable contribution to the history of the Greek stage. This material the reviser, Mr. Pickard-Cambridge, has taken into due consideration, but the time of the publication of Wilhelm's book prevented his making full use of it, inasmuch as the revision of the present volume was almost complete by that date. However, he has made accessible in Appendix B all the important inscriptional material.

Mr. Pickard-Cambridge's purpose seems to have been to follow out such indications as he could find of Mr. Haigh's own intentions in regard to the new edition. He states in the Preface the parts